



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Nothing In Life Is Free

Does your dog jump up to greet you when you come home, demand petting by pushing your arm with her nose, or try to grab his toy or ball from your hand?

Would you like to change these behaviors?

By setting boundaries and teaching your dog what behavior is acceptable you can turn your dog into a well-mannered companion.

Setting boundaries works for any dog who gets excited or can be pushy and demanding regardless of its age-- puppy, adolescent or senior.

If we approach setting boundaries as a 'benevolent leader' who provides guidance by teaching our dogs what behaviors are acceptable, we improve the relationships with our dogs and gain their trust; they will soon look to us for guidance. This is similar to parents instructing and rewarding children for good behavior.

We strongly recommend setting boundaries using positive reinforcement. Rather than punishing a dog for unwanted behavior, we encourage and reward desired behavior. To let the dog know that a behavior is not acceptable, use a verbal reprimand immediately followed by the command or cue for the behavior you want. For example, if you are playing ball with your dog, and she jumps up to grab it from your hand, you would say 'Huh, Huh' and ask your dog to sit. When your dog sits, immediately give the reward: another toss of the ball.

This technique is called "Nothing in Life is Free" or 'Say Please". NILIF or Say Please work because we use what dogs want to motivate and train them. Think about your dog when you get out the leash to go for a walk; he's excited because he knows something fun is going to happen.

Dogs, like people, learn very quickly to do what works to get something they want. They learn to associate their actions with results. For example, the dog learns that if I 'sit' then I get a treat or go for a walk. In fact, dogs will offer a behavior before you even give the command. NILIF or Say Please methods work using the dog's own desires teaching them to 'earn' their reward by doing something we want them to do. NILIF or Say Please are easy training programs to implement. First, the Benevolent Leader (you) controls all the resources and good things in the dog's environment and life. What is considered a "good" thing will vary from dog to dog. Second, "Life Rewards" motivate dogs and are used for teaching wanted behaviors. This means that we do not need to set aside special training times. NILIF or Say Please become part of our everyday routine, practiced throughout the day.

It is important to first teach your dog some basic commands such as sit, down, stay and come. Cute tricks like 'shake' can also work. Once the dog knows basic commands, you can start the NILIF or Say Please training. Remember to train in different locations to help your dog practice.

Once your dog understands that when she will be rewarded for doing a 'sit,' "shake" or "lie down" command, she may do one of her tricks or commands in anticipation of the reward. If this happens, give your dog a command requesting her to do something else she knows. For example, if you get out the leash and your dog sits before you've asked, then ask your dog to shake and then put on the leash to go for a walk.

Here are a few examples of NILIF or Say Please training opportunities:

- Meals: Whether you feed your dog from a food dispensing toy or bowl ask her to do something before giving the food. For example, "Sit". Then when the dog sits, give her the food.



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- **Food Begging:** If your dog begs for good when you are eating, don't give him any. This rewards and encourages undesirable behavior. Instead, bring a small treat of human food to your dog's food dish, ask him to do a command he knows and then drop the food into his bowl. If you have questions about what human foods your dog can have please ask your veterinarian.
- **Playing ball:** Ask your dog to 'shake' and then toss the ball.
- **Furniture or bed:** The dog should comply with a command before going onto furniture. Also, dogs should always get down from furniture when requested. Never pull your dog off the furniture or bed by her collar as it could lead to conflict and aggression.
- **Water Game:** Dogs who love to bite water from a hose will learn very quickly that FUN only happens after sitting or offering their paw. If your dog likes to bite water from the garden hose, ask him to sit and then turn on the water!
- **Chew toys or treat:** Teach your dog a trick (spin, shake, rollover) and request a special trick before giving the treat.
- **Walks:** Dogs love walks and will get excited when you get the leash. Make sure to ask your dog to sit politely before putting on its leash or starting your walk. You can also ask your dog to sit at curbs before crossing the street. Ask your dog to sit, and then give it its command ("Let's go") to keep walking. The reward is that the dog gets to keep walking. By teaching your dog to sit at curbs, you have also kept your dog safe.
- **Petting:** If a dog is pushy and demands attention by barking at or nudging you with its nose, ask it to lie down, shake or another of her tricks before petting her.

Every dog is different, so think hard about what activities your dog enjoys, and use those activities as 'Life Rewards' during the day. Be creative and have fun! You will enjoy making training a part of your everyday routine.

For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.